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Action

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TO: Secretary of State

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It contains nothing of CIA interest

EYES ONLY ACTING SECRETARY FROM SECRETARY

LONDON EYES ONLY AMBASSADOR

I had a very frank talk with Eden today, in the course of which he handed me the following memorandum:

"South-East Asian defence.

"1. Communism in Asia cannot (repeat not) be checked by military means alone. The problem is as much political as military; if any military combination is to be effective, it must enjoy the widest possible measure of Asian support.

"2. We should aim to get the support of Burma as well as Siam as the immediate neighbours of Indo-China. But Burma will not (repeat not) come in unless the project commands some sympathy from other Asian countries, particularly the Asian members of the Commonwealth.

"3. If we cannot (repeat not) win the active support of all the Asian countries of the area, it is important that we should, at the very least, secure their benevolent neutrality.

"4. To secure this widely based Asian support, we must prepare the ground carefully for what is, in any case, intended to be a lasting defensive organization, not (repeat not) a hastily contrived expedient to meet the present crisis.

"5. This does not (repeat not) mean that we desire to delay. On the contrary, we have already been actively using our influence, particularly with the Asian members of the Commonwealth, with encouraging results. Pakistan and Ceylon have already promised not (repeat not) to oppose a South-East Asian collective defence on the lines we envisage, and we have succeeded in diverting Mr. Nehru from his original intention of condemning it root and branch. We have thus averted the danger that the

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Asian Prime Ministers at Colombo would unite in condemning our project, and have grounds for hoping for the actual support of some of them.

"6. Mr. Nehru's latest statement shows that his ideas have moved closer to our own. With persistence, we may even secure his endorsement of the kind of negotiated settlement in Indo-China that would be acceptable to us.

"7. While we do not (repeat not) believe that a French collapse in Indo-China could come about as rapidly or as completely as the Americans appear to envisage, this danger reinforces the need to lay the foundations of a wider and viable defence organization for South-East Asia.

"8. We propose therefore that the United States and the United Kingdom should begin an immediate and secret joint examination of the political and military problems involved in creating a collective defence for South-East Asia, namely: (A) nature and purpose; (B) membership; (C) commitments.

This examination should also cover immediate aid measures to stiffen Siam."

Report of my conversation follows by separate cable.

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